

MAR 1952 51-86

CLASSIFICATION RESTRICTED
 SECURITY INFORMATION
 CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
 INFORMATION FROM
 FOREIGN DOCUMENTS OR RADIO BROADCASTS

REPORT

CD NO.

DATE OF
INFORMATION 1953

DATE DIST. 24 Nov 1953

NO. OF PAGES 2

SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

COUNTRY Czechoslovakia
 SUBJECT Transportation - Railroad electrification
 HOW PUBLISHED Daily newspaper
 WHERE PUBLISHED Zurich
 DATE PUBLISHED 10 Sep 1953
 LANGUAGE German

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SOURCE Neue Zuercher Zeitung (AM Edition)

ELECTRIFICATION OF CZECH STATE RAILROADS

The reorientation of Czech foreign trade toward the East, which at present comprises about 70 percent of Czechoslovakia's total foreign trade, has presented the state railroads with the formidable task of expanding the railroad lines leading to the USSR to take care of greatly increased freight traffic in grains, ores, and machinery.

The former Kosice-Bohumin line, which connects the large industrial region of North Morava (Ostrava-Bohumin) with the new Cop border station by way of North Slovakia, is the main railroad line between Czechoslovakia and the USSR. Cop has been made the main transshipment point for the change-over from Czech standard-gauge to Soviet wide-gauge rails.

The electrification of a central portion of this line will not only speed operations and reduce costs but will make possible heavier freight traffic through the use of automatic block signals. Electrification of the 165-kilometer Zilina-Vrutky-Martin-Spisska Nova Ves line is completed and conversion from steam to electric operations is in progress. It is estimated that 200,000 tons of coal, still not mined in sufficient quantity, will be saved on a 100-kilometer stretch. One hundred electric locomotives will replace 300 steam locomotives. Freight traffic will be increased by one third.

Simultaneous electrification and installation of automatic signaling devices (developed in the USSR), which mechanically block stretches one kilometer in length, permit the freight trains to safely cut in half the former 5-10 minute intervals between trains. Previously, stretches of 4 kilometers were controlled by signals and station signs. Now, unguarded railroad crossings are controlled by light signals and bells; barriers are automatically opened and closed.

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The Zilina-Vrutky-Martin stretch carries the heaviest traffic of the entire line. Four double-track railroad lines run parallel (from Prague/Bohumin, Bratislava, Zvolen, and Kosice).

The electrification of two portions of the West-East line in Bohemia, connecting Prague with Cop, is almost completed. The number of tracks have been increased and freight depots expanded.

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